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SOUTH CAROLINA'S NEWSWEEKLY

osceola

Dairy Commission:

Goring the consumers?

'In the Dairy Commission We Trust'

Illustration by Lynn Cansler

by Bob Thompson

Gary E. Byrd, a tobacco farmer from Darlington County, lounged back in his chair in the State House, gazing distantly about the House chamber, where other representatives were getting in some post-lunch banter. Byrd is an immense man, slow of motion but quick of wit. Though he doesn't talk unnecessarily much, his rambling monologues can keep his listeners doubled up in laughter -- when he wants.

But Byrd was not in a mood to entertain last week. The subject was the Dairy Commission, which, while not exactly a sore point, is not the type of thing Byrd would joke about. He feels very strongly about the need for the commission, and it shows.

Having just answered a number of questions about milk price regulation and the Dairy Commission, Byrd seemed worried that his defense of the dairy industry might not be too popular with readers tired of inflation and wary of price freezes (national or otherwise).

"If you leave now, you'll make me look like I got **horns**," Byrd complained. A fitting image, if ever there was one. Anyway, Byrd got his requested chance to tell why consumers of milk and milk products in South Carolina are not getting such a bad deal, despite numerous studies asserting that prices are kept artificially high by state regulation.

Byrd was the main proponent of a bill, written by the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and passed by the House a month ago, would reconstitute the state Dairy Commission and slightly modify milk price controls. The bill received stiff opposition from representatives who feel the Dairy Commission is an unnecessary bureaucratic boondoggle and that it has created a state-sanctioned, inefficient dairy monopoly which keeps prices artificially high. Opponents of the so-called Dairy Industry Stabilization Act claim the bill is essentially a cosmetic device that offers minor consolations to the consumer in hopes of averting the dismantling or weakening of the Dairy Commission.

The bill is one of several pieces of legislation introduced in the House this year concerning the Dairy Commission. Bills were also introduced by Rep. Ralph King Anderson, Jr. (D-Florence) and John H. LaFitte (D-Richland) to abolish the Dairy Commission, but neither passed.

The Dairy Industry Stabilization Act currently awaits action on the Senate floor, after having been recalled from the Senate Agriculture Committee without a report, and it is now up for second reading. The Senate probably will pass the bill, predicted Byrd.

The dairy bill is halfway into a process that has happened several times before. What generally happens, when the South Carolina Supreme Court rules that milk price fixing is unconstitutional -- as it has done three times in the last dozen years -- is that a minor reorganization of the Dairy Commission will be enacted by the General Assembly but somehow the Commission always manages to retain its price fixing powers.

That seems to be exactly what is happening now. Pressure has been put on the General Assembly to do something about the milk situation because of the present unconstitutional practices, and some legislation must be passed. But critics of the dairy industry say that a powerful dairy lobby at the State House is keeping meaningful reform legislation from being enacted.

Here are the main changes the Dairy Industry Stabilization Act would make.

--Consumer representation on the ten-member Commission will be increased from four to five persons. The number of milk producers will be reduced from three to two, and the number of distributors and merchants will remain at one each. The state Commissioner of Agriculture, William L. Harrelson, will remain an ex officio member; he'll be able to vote in case of a tie, and his presence will count toward a quorum.

--The minimum wholesale price of milk cannot be lower than the "invoice price," meaning that rebates cannot be considered in establishing the lowest price at which milk can be sold wholesale.

--While there are no controls **per se** on the retail price of milk, stores would be prohibited from selling milk and milk products at less than what those products cost them wholesale.

--Rebates must be uniform, "regardless of the quantity of milk sold." In other words, distributors must give the same rebate, or kickback, to retailers for a grade of milk or milk product, without regard to how much those retailers buy (in effect outlawing volume discounts).

The bill, as it now stands, leaves in the Dairy Commission bill several provisions which consumer groups have been seeking to get rid of. Naturally, controls on milk prices either at the wholesale or retail levels have been the focus of most debate. Consumer representatives say that price controls are aimed at assuring high profits for the dairy industry, while the dairy industry replies that without price controls, small producers and distributors would be driven out of business by price wars and in the long run higher prices would result.

Another consumer gripe which the bill doesn't answer is the utilization of milk. What happens now is that distributors buy raw milk from the dairy farmers with the agreement that the producers (farmers) will be paid according to the way the raw milk is utilized. Let's assume all the raw milk is pasteurized and converted into whole milk for drinking purposes. The whole milk is put up for sale in a grocery store, but not all of the milk can be sold before it would spoil. So the distributor takes back the unbought whole milk and converts it into cottage cheese or sour cream or a similar product. At the end of the month, the distributor pays the producer according to the way the raw milk was utilized -- he pays more for the raw milk that was sold as whole drinking milk, and less for the raw milk that was converted into a lower-grade product like cottage cheese.

Critics of the utilization system say that it takes away any incentive the distributors and merchants may have to sell the high-grade milk products, which means that the producers will be paid less for their raw milk. Ultimately, this extra burden that the dairy farmers must pay for inefficient marketing practices will be passed on to the consumers. Hence, higher prices.

Another present inequity which the bill does not yet resolve is the inability of consumers to question milk prices set by the Dairy Commission. According to the bill, anyone "aggrieved by an order or act of the Commission" can take their complaint to the court of common pleas. Yet before a plaintiff can take the Dairy Commission to court, he or she must post a bond with the Commission sufficient to pay for any losses the dairy industry may suffer because of an injunction. In short, if you want to even question a milk price hike, you must first be willing and able to put up the money the state's dairies might lose if the court postpones the price increase. And that could mean thousands of dollars a day. Public Voice and other consumer groups have claimed that having to post an excessive bond is tantamount to denial of due process of law.

The question, though, is not what the bill now under consideration wouldn't do, but what it would do. While making minor concessions to consumers, such as providing another representative on the Commission, the bill would also undo a judicial decision that has resulted in lower milk prices for consumers and it would write into law justification for several Dairy Commission policies. While the bill may be one step forward for the dairy industry, it seems a definite step backwards for the consumer.

Of most recent interest in the milk price debate was a ruling by Circuit Judge price debate was a ruling by Circuit Judge James A. Spruill, Jr., in Anderson several weeks ago that rebates may be included in computations to determine the price merchants pay for their milk. Thus the plaintiff, Bi-Lo, Inc. of Mauldin, was enabled to sell milk to its customers for as little as what it cost the grocery chain to buy that milk from distrubutors -- with rebates figured in. For a merchant the size of Bi-Lo, that could amount to 14 percent less than the invoice cost of the milk. Spruill's decision had overturned rulings by the Dairy Commission that rebates could not be considered in determining wholesale costs.

Rebates are presently given to merchants by distributors on a volume basis -- the more milk a merchant buys, the larger rebate he gets off the price he pays for that milk. Merchants buying under $100 per month got no rebate; those buying $100 got a three percent rebate; and merchants purchasing over $6,000 a month in milk (which includes most large grocery chains) received the maximum 14 percent rebate. Bi-Lo, for instance, paid the invoice price of $1.62

(continued on page 2)

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"Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one."
—press critic A.J. Liebling

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The milk price battle

(continued from page 1)

a gallon for milk but later got a 14 percent rebate, reducing its actual cost per gallon to $1.39. Spruill's decision allowed Bi-Lo to sell milk for as low as $1.39, after the Dairy Commission had said Bi-Lo could only go as low as $1.62 (the invoice price).

The Dairy Industry Stabilization Act would, significantly, exclude rebates from consideration in determining minimum wholesale costs. And because the bill also says that the retail price of milk can't be any lower than the wholesale price, it also indirectly regulates the retail price. Which means that Spruill's ruling -- not to mention the up to 23 cents per gallon savings consumers could get -- will be down the drain if the bill is passed by the Senate and approved by the governor.

If the bill is assured of passage, as Byrd thinks, that could explain why the Dairy Commission is overtly accepting the Spruill ruling. Several days after the ruling, Commission chairman Eugene E. Stone of Florence voiced apparent acquiescence when he said, "The ruling sounds reasonable to me."

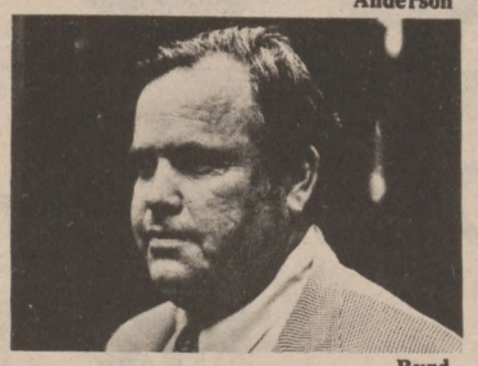
The increase in consumer representation on the Dairy Commission is seen by many critics as an insignificant gain, and William G. Harden, former Director of Public Voice, called it "a farce" because, he believes, the present "consumer representatives" aren't always looking out for the interests of the consumers.

One consumer representative, J.T. Lazar, is a Clemson University dairy science professor and, according to Harden, he is more likely to vote with the producers and distributors on the Commission than with the other consumer members.

Ralph King Anderson, one of the bill's most vocal critics in the House, said "adding one consumer to the Commission is ridiculous" when the Commission is still allowed price-fixing powers. "This bill here doesn't solve the problem at all -- it's simply window-dressing," Anderson continued.

Other legislators, such as Rep. John K. Earle, feel the increase in consumer representation is one of the bill's major changes. "In the past," said Earle, "if the people involved (non-consumers) all voted together, they could always have a one-vote majority." Now, Earle explained, "consumers could theoretically dominate the Commission."

Anderson



Byrd

That seems a very distant possibility, the way things are going for the Dairy Commission now. The consumerist trend which reared its troublesome head during the fall elections has taken a more ostrich-like stance recently, as legislators once critical of milk price controls and other Dairy Commission regulatory measures are now tending to tolerate them.

"We had a consumer-oriented House supposedly elected," lamented Ralph Anderson, "but the end result indicates just the opposite." Anderson is not the only legislator who wishes more House members had stuck to their guns on the dairy bill. Henry Floyd (D-Pickens), who voted against the recent bill, criticized his colleagues, saying, "We completely reversed our attitudes from last year." And Bill Campbell (D-Richland) has his own theory to explain the easy going the Dairy Commission has had: "I think people have been numbed by high prices."

The problem is that not everyone thinks South Carolina's milk drinkers have it that bad. There is a very conspicuous, hardworking dairy lobby at work daily in the State House, trying to convince legislators that South Carolina's producers and distributors need the high prices fixed by the Dairy Commission if they are to make enough profit to stay in business. In 1973, according to figures supplied to the S.C. Secretary of State, the dairy lobbyists claimed expenses of a mere $10.82 in the Palmetto state. One year later, that figure had increased to $3,700, and Bill Harden of Public Voice estimated that the lobbyists this year are spending at least that much money. It's possible to accurately inflate that figure further, when one considers that usually the expenses lobbyists report are far less than what they actually spend in influencing legislation.

Neither does it hurt the cause of the dairy industry to have legislators like Gary Byrd championing their cause. Byrd's philosophy on the issue is a peculiar mixture of old-school laissez-faire economics and a more liberal concept that government should intervene to protect the interests of farmers. On the one hand he sounds like a die-hard conservative when he rails about "giant bargaining coops" trying to put smaller producers and distributors out of business, and then he quickly jumps on the bandwagon of strong government when he says, "**Someone** is going to control the price of milk."

Byrd's attitude is that the federal government won't allow a commodity as important as milk to go uncontrolled -- there's "not a state" where the price of milk isn't somehow controlled, he says, "to my knowledge" -- and it's a lot better to have the state regulating milk prices than the federal government. Byrd contends that South Carolinians pay no more for milk than citizens of other southeastern states, and that it is unfair to compare prices here with those in the heart of the dairy country, states such as Wisconsin, where milk can be produced more cheaply.

"Our people are very strict about the way milk is handled," says Byrd, referring to the state Department of Health and Environmental Control. Don't get him wrong -- Byrd has nothing against these high health and quality standards. "I think they're good," he avers. But "other states don't have these high standards" to pay for, he explains, "and subsequently the quality of their milk is not as good as ours."

"People think if the Dairy Commission were abolished, everything would be done on a free enterprise system. But that's not the way it works," Byrd says. His most abiding fear is that if the price of milk were allowed to be determined by market factors rather than by the Dairy Commission, giant bargaining cooperatives would spring up and force the smaller producers and distributors out of business.

Balderdash, Ralph Anderson politely implies. "Even now the number of dairies is decreasing," he responds, and there is no reason to believe that relinquishing milk price controls would do any **more** harm to small dairymen. And Anderson took issue with Byrd's theory that free prices would force dairymen into joining monopolistic bargaining coops or be ruined, calling the idea "totally incorrect -- not a just conclusion."

The question of the constitutionality of milk price regulation is far from being settled. Each time that the state Supreme Court has ruled price fixing is unconstitutional, the General Assembly has made cosmetic changes in the powers and policies of the Dairy Commission, altering them just enough that the court is forced to make another ruling.

Where will it all end? The best bet looks to be a suit in U.S. District Court which was filed in December of 1973 by Public Voice and other consumers, challenging the price regulation. A three-judge panel has been assigned to hear the case -- Robert Martin, Donald Russell and Clement Haynsworth -- but the judges have decided to postpone the case until the General Assembly is adjourned this summer. The reasoning of the federal judges apparently is that any decision they might make before then could be rendered moot if the General Assembly passes another law this year concerning milk prices. In that event, the plaintiffs would have to either file another suit against the Dairy Commission, or they'd have to drastically amend the present one -- either of which alternatives would mean a lot of wasted time in court.

In the meantime, we can look for a lot more action in the State House corridors and lobbies by the dairy industry's irrepressible lobbyists. There's a lot at stake.

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Quick death for the ERA

The Equal Rights Amendment, as you all know, is dead -- as far as South Carolina is concerned -- until the next legislative session.

It was a quick, painless death. Legislators were thankfully spared the trauma of having to debate the issues, pro and con. There was none of that despicable divisiveness that goes with reasoning out an answer, thank God.

The strategy by which ERA opponents managed to "bring us together" was unerringly and uncannily simple -- lull the proponents into complacency with campaign promises, then wait until pro-ERA legislators are out to lunch and deliver the death blow quickly and quietly.

The end of the ERA may have come silently last week, but things weren't so quiet afterward. Anti-ERA forces in the House, led by conservatives Norma Russell of Lexington and former speaker Sol Blatt of Barnwell and moderate mugwump Ralph K. Anderson of Florence, were able to force a vote on the ERA before many representatives had even returned from lunch or mid-day meetings. Thus only 89 of 124 House members were present to slip by a motion to table the ERA, and a little later only 99 members were on hand to reject a last-gasp attempt to reconsider the ERA.

The motion to table the ERA, passed by a narrow 46-43 margin, proved the height of irony. Only two years before, House liberals were able to get a rules change passed that reduced the number of votes needed to end debate and table a bill from a majority (or 63 representatives) to a plurality (simply, more than half the representatives present at any particular time). The anomaly of it all was that, while the rules change was originally intended by liberals to enable them to stop filibusters by conservatives more easily, the procedural change was used against the liberals in the case of the ERA.

But that wasn't what upset the pro-ERA forces most. After all, rules are rules, and if you're willing to give you must also be willing to take the same punishment. No, what members of the Coalition for the ERA and other supporters were hopping mad about was the treachery of representatives who had pledged support for the ERA but then voted so quickly to table the amendment. Adding salt to the feminist wounds was the fact that three sponsors of the ERA voted against it -- Richland County Democrats Harold E. Taylor and Robert Burnside, and Richard M. Kenan (D-Newberry).

A complaint that Keller Bumgardner of the ERA Coalition voiced against press coverage of the House votes was that more emphasis was placed on the motion to table than the motion to reconsider. The second vote (56-43) was more indicative of the way House members stood on the ERA, she said, because it proved the ultimate death blow to the ERA. (After the House votes once against reconsidering a motion, that motion cannot be reintroduced until the next legislative session -- 1977 in this case).

Bumgardner pointed out to **Osceola** that several opponents of the ERA had voted against the motion to table, simply because they felt the issue at least ought to be discussed on the floor of the House.

The results of the second vote -- to reconsider the ERA -- are listed on page 4. The ERA Coalition has claimed that eight representatives who voted against the ERA last week had reneged on pre-election pledges to vote for the ERA. The names of the Coalition's "Dirty-8 who welshed on pre-election promises" are indicated by an asterisk.

Bumgardner said the Coalition "consciously made an effort to get pre-election commitments" so that representatives could be taken to task if they "welshed." She said her records of pre-election commitments for or against the ERA were taken from either a League of Women Voters questionnaire or a Common Cause survey of all candidates for office. Bumgardner categorically denied claims by some members of the "Dirty-8" -- Bob Burnside was one -- who said they hadn't given pre-election commitments for the ERA. As to claims by some "welshers" that they didn't know they were being asked for positive commitments on the ERA, Bumgardner emphasized, "They were very much aware of it."

If there is any positive note to the tabling of the ERA, it is that when the amendment comes up again two years from now, the climate is likely to be more favorable for the ERA. The question now for ERA supporters is whether it would be more beneficial to reintroduce the ERA in an even year (in other words, directly preceding statewide elections) or an odd year. If the General Assembly perceives the public mood is in favor of the ERA, and election time is imminent, the legislators would probably be more likely to approve the amendment.

"I would like to see it (the ERA) come up again in 1976," said Janet Wedlock of the ERA Coalition. "I'm not sure we could afford to let

(continued on page 4)

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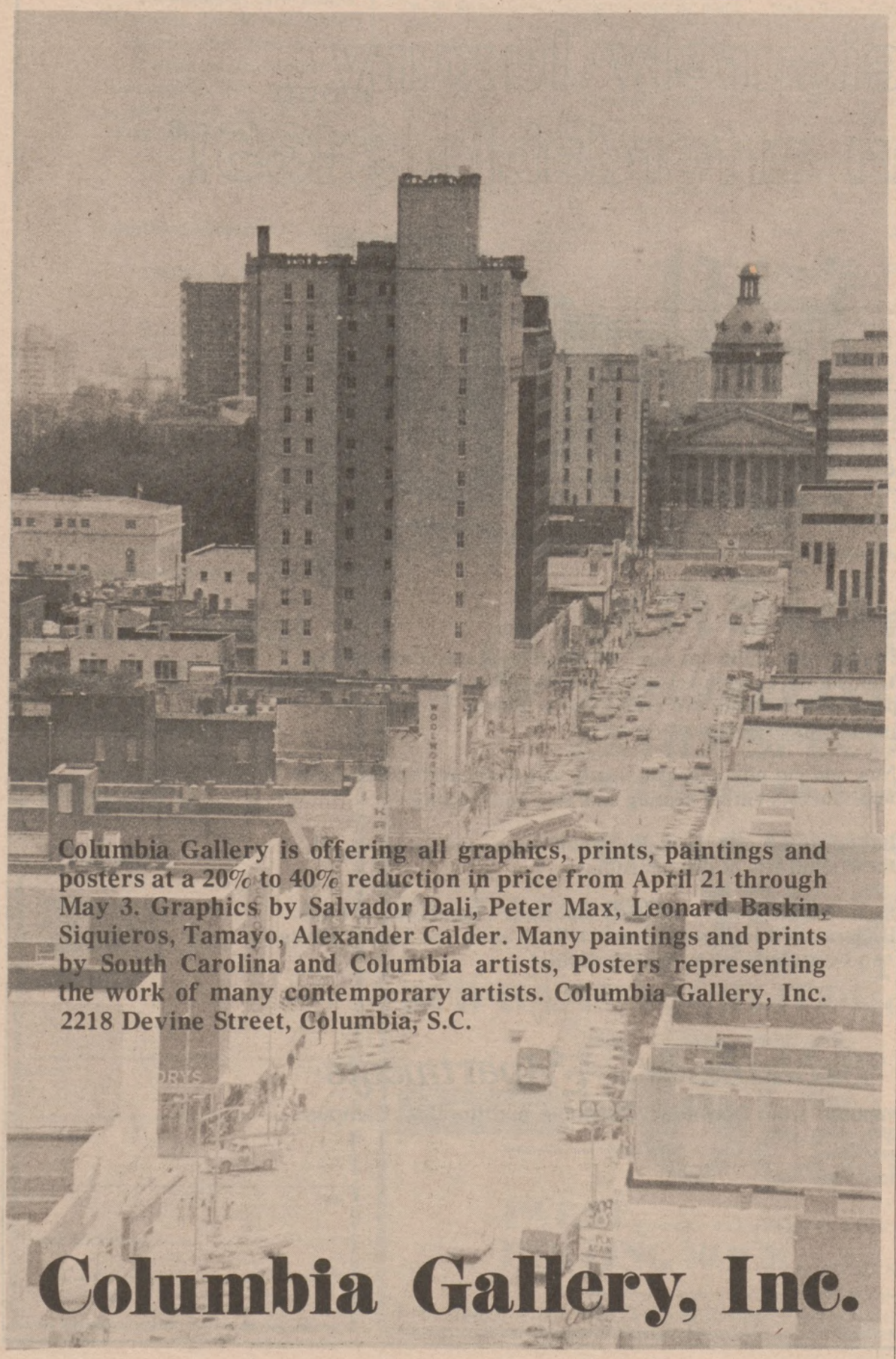
another year slip by." But, according to House rules, it is apparently impossible for the ERA to be brought up again next year. If an even year is indeed the most favorable time for reintroduction. 1978 would be the year, because 1979 is the deadline for approval or rejection of the ERA. Should the ERA fail in 1978, you can kiss equal rights good-bye.

House members voting to table the motion to reconsider the ERA:

Ralph K. Anderson
James M. Arthur
R. J. Aycock
*Jewel S. Baskin
Solomon Blatt
Eugene S. Blease
John D. Bradley
*Robert H. Burnside
Gary E. Byrd
Marion P. Carnell
*Jones M. Chamblee
William R. Clyburn
Cecil L. Collins
*M.J. Cooper
Michael R. Daniel
J.C. Duncan
John K. Earle
S. Norwood Gasque
Paul Gelegotis
Herbert C. Granger
*J. Wilton Graves
H. Ray Ham
J.B. Harvey
John C. Heinemann
Robert L. Helmly
B.L. Hendricks
John L. Henson
Caldwell T. Hinson
D.N. Holt
Ben F. Hornsby
Beattie E. Huff
Lloyd E. Hunt
Richard M. Kenan
Albert L. Kleckley
Robert E. Kneece
Robert A. Kohn
Larry L. Koon
John H. LaFitte
Tom G. Mangum
Jennings G. McAbee
*Marion D. McGowan
Peden McLeod
William J. McLeod
Dolphus C. Medley
Fred T. Moore
Charles L. Powell
William A. Reel
Norma Russell
Cecil Sandifer
*William C. Stanley
Eugene C. Stoddard
William H. Stroud
*Harold E. Taylor
John H. Waller
John T. Wood

House members voting to reconsider the ERA:

Rex Carter
J. Clator Arrants
Gordon B. Baker
Hudson Lee Barksdale
Danny M. Bruce
M. Judson Busbee
William M. Campbell
Marvin Collins
Clyde M. Dangerfield
Gene W. Dukes
H. Parker Evatt
John G. Felder
Ernest Finney
Henry Floyd
Carolyn Frederick
Juanita Goggins
George Gregory
David O. Hawkins
Charles E. Hodges
David W. Keller
John C. Land
Toney J. Lister
Thomas M. Marchant
John W. Matthews
David F. McInnis
Earl M. Middleton
Theo Mitchell
James E. Moore
James H. Moss
Melvin E. Nunnery
Kay Patterson
John L. Rogers
Irene K. Rudnick
Ramon Schwartz
Edward W. Simpson
John H. Smith
Ferdinan B. Stevenson
Nick A. Theodore
Wheeler Tillman
Jean H. Toal
H. Keith Vanderford
James B. Van Osdell
George Wilson



Columbia Gallery is offering all graphics, prints, paintings and posters at a 20% to 40% reduction in price from April 21 through May 3. Graphics by Salvador Dali, Peter Max, Leonard Baskin, Siquieros, Tamayo, Alexander Calder. Many paintings and prints by South Carolina and Columbia artists, Posters representing the work of many contemporary artists. Columbia Gallery, Inc. 2218 Devine Street, Columbia, S.C.

Columbia Gallery, Inc.

'Hard times' hit SCE&G

Oh, woe is we. South Carolina Electric and Gas has hit upon hard times, or at least that's what SCE&G spokespersons have been telling the press and the Public Service Commission.

In defense of the 25 percent rate hike SCE&G has requested from the PSC, the company's financial expert Oscar Wooten told the PSC in February: "To put it bluntly, the company's earnings have declined to a point that without rate relief it will be faced with financial disaster."

One statistic cited by SCE&G officials to show why they need the rate increase is the 101 percent increase in the fuel costs, yet under South Carolina law the utility is allowed to pass any increase in fuel costs along to the consumer without a hearing under the fuel adjustment clause. And SCE&G has passed the 101 percent increase along.

They also say they've realized a 3.8 percent decrease in electricity sales from 1973 to 1974. Yet, by their own admission, revenues have increased by 40 percent in the same period.

That 3.8 percent decrease in electricity sales takes on a new meaning when applied to a comment made by SCE&G spokesman Rudy Coward to the Associated Press this week. Coward told the AP that the utility has tried to cut costs by placing restrictions on the use of company vehicles and reducing personnel costs by not replacing employees who leave the company. But Coward said the major cost-cutting move was the nearly $1.3 billion reduction in projected construction, which includes dropping plans to build two new nuclear power plants and a second fossil unit at Williams Station. Well, with a 3.8 percent decrease sales, who needs $1.3 billion worth of new plants to produce electricity?

And should you still be worried about poor SCE&G going under, these facts should cheer you up:

--SCE&G President Arthur Williams still makes $103,000 a year.

--According to the stock listings one day this week, SCE&G stock was selling at 14 and a fourth, up one-eighth from the previous day. And they're paying $1.48 in dividends.

--Whole inflation has been 12 percent per year in this country, but SCE&G in recent years has raised its rates 70 percent for its residential customers.

So sleep well tonight, SCE&G is safe.

Local color

The capital city may be "where it's at" in most respects, but in the hustle and bustle one irreplaceable quality has been lost -- quaintness. Columbia's newspapers might take a hint from the **Anderson Independent** in that respect. The **Independent**, since being taken over by chain newspaper management two or three years ago, has been on a more "progressive" bent stylistically and editorially, but the newspaper hasn't lost all its quaintness.

An interesting remnant of the **Independent's** past is its "Anderson Scenes" section, a compendium of little "slices of life" that are aimed at capturing some of the picturesqueness of semi-rustic society (not to mention capturing some older readers). A typical entry might be, "... Baby's drawers falling down in middle of Fourth of July parade...Local businessman commenting on wife's new dress, 'I didn't know you shopped at Good Will'...Secretary describing new boyfriend to her colleagues, "He's just like Robert Redford -- except he's bald'..."

Too bad some of the local dailies don't have such a feature. There are a number of items we'd like to contribute, like one we saw this week. "...A finny old Cadillac lumbering down a Five Points street, stopping to park, with fenders jutting out, before a hairdressing salon; aged black chauffeur, wearing baggy brown 30s-ish suit and straw hat with brim sweeping low across his face, taking 15 seconds to shuffle ever-so-slowly around to right rear door, where fur-bedecked, middle-aged white lady with platinum beehive waits patiently to be helped out..."

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CIA probe flops

WASHINGTON - The House investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency is floundering.

Two months ago, Rep. Lucien Nedzi, D-Mich., was named chairman of a select committee that will probe the intelligence community. As the head of an Armed Services subcommittee which oversees the CIA, Nedzi had already gained some repute as a toothless watchdog.

Now, critics say, he is living up to his reputation.

To this date, he has neither named a chief counsel for the special committee nor hired a staff. At first, say our sources, he wanted to transfer the staff chief of his regular subcommittee to the new panel. That suggestion, however, was dropped when it met with criticism from some of Nedzi's colleagues.

Since then, insiders say, Nedzi has been searching for a staff director who will not project a "prosecutorial image." He wants a man "in the mold" of John Doar, the lawyer who headed the staff of the House impeachment panel. Indeed, Nedzi has met with Doar to seek his recommendations.

So far, Nedzi's search has proven fruitless. Watergate prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste, for example, turned down the job to pursue other "interests." Library of Congress official Lester Jayson has been asked, but he can't decide whether to accept. And two prominent Michigan jurists, Otis Smith and Ted Souris, have also rejected Nedzi's offers.

The special Senate committee, in contrast, is deep into the probe of the CIA.

Medicare Fraud: The Medicare and medicaid programs are being ripped off to the tune of $3 billion a year.

Chiseling doctors, cheating patients and even the Mafia have been pocketing federal money intended for the poor and elderly sick. In all, congressional investigators estimate, about 10 percent of Medicare and medicaid money is being paid out to flim-flam experts.

Disreputable doctors have been inflating their bills, the investigators found, to collect more from the government. In Chicago, the Mafia has apparently moved into an illegal bill-collection racket to exploit the welfare system. And, of course, patients can file false claims to collect Medicare money.

Perhaps the most incredible case is that of the "Welfare Queen" of Illinois. Investigators have found that she first posed as a surgeon and billed the state for performing an open heart operation. Then she turned around and posed as the heart patient and collected for paying her phony doctor bill. Finally, she submitted a bill for additional $16 a day as the heart patient's private nurse.

The investigators turned up similar schemes all across the country. But only one in 10 cheats is caught, they say. Congress is now being asked to provide more money for policing the Medicare and medicaid programs.

Bilked Again? The Federal energy Administration has ordered oil companies caught overcharging to roll back their prices and reimburse their customers.

But the question now arises whether the consumers will be bilked out of the reimbursements. Sources high in the Federal Energy Administration tell us that they're afraid the rebates will never reach the consumers. Here's why.

The oilmen overcharged the utility companies for fuel. The oilmen, therefore, must reimburse the utilities. The Federal Energy Administration does not have the power to pass the savings along to their customers.

When fuel costs went up, of course, the utilities always added the increases to their customers' fuel bills. But now that the overcharges will be paid back, the utilities are less anxious to share the rebates with their customers.

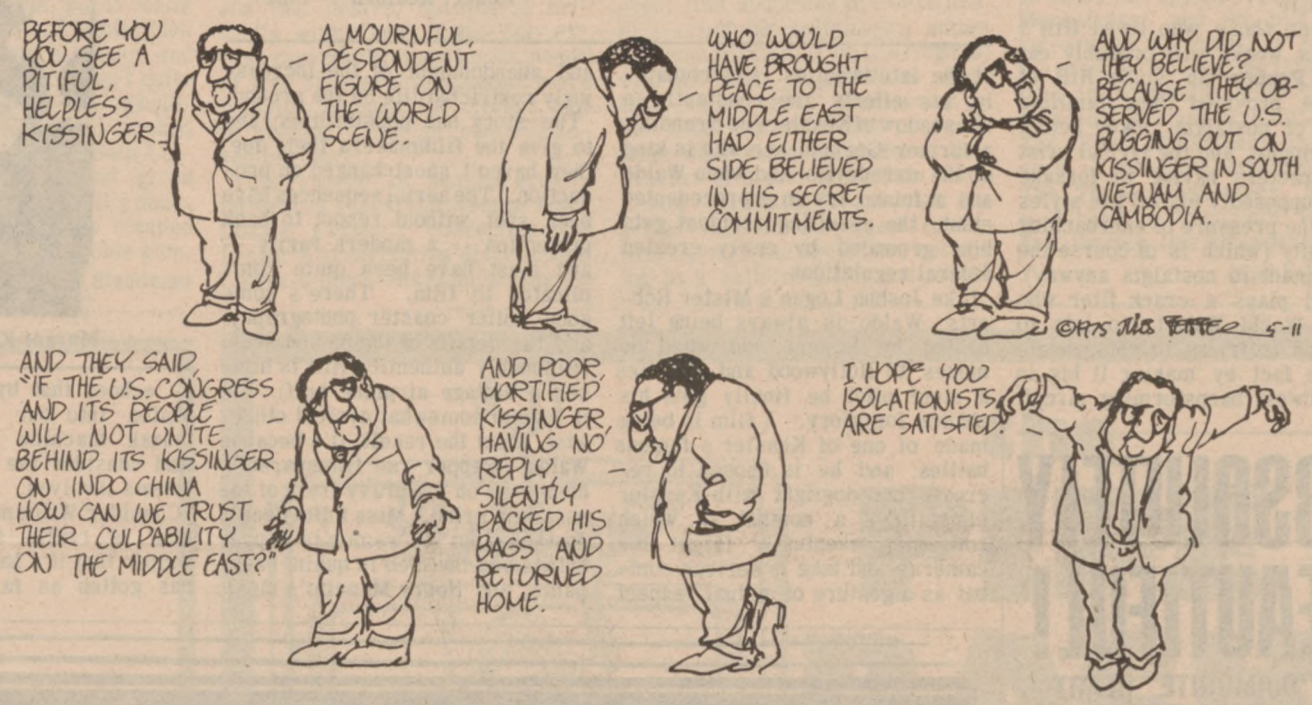
Our sources are worried that the utilities will find some excuse to pocket the reimbursements.

Good Dope: The CIA has been caught tapping telephones, opening mail and spying on American citizens in violation of the law. But behind the scenes, the agency is carrying on its intelligence activities as usual.

Each day, it produces the most accurate, best written intelligence reports available in Washington. The first thing President Ford does when he gets up each morning is read the CIA's intelligence summary. And CIA chief William Colby leads off each National Security Council meeting with an intelligence briefing.

The intelligence that comes out of the State and Defense Departments is usually slanted to support the policies that those departments advocate. CIA intelligence, on the other hand, is usually straight.

Feiffer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AND THEY SAID "IF THE U.S. CONGRESS AND ITS PEOPLE WILL NOT UNITE BEHIND ITS KISSINGER ON INDO CHINA HOW CAN WE TRUST THEIR CULPABILITY ON THE MIDDLE EAST?"
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The Great Waldo Pepper
at the Dutch Square North

The Great Waldo Pepper starts off with the old Universal trade mark -- the toy airplane circling the globe -- and its obvious from the start that this is going to be another cutesy spectacular on the order of **The Sting** and **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Waldo Pepper** has the same director as those two movies (George Roy Hill), the same writer as **Butch Cassidy** (William Goldman), and one of the same stars from both (Robert Redford), and clearly anyone who was revolted by the self-conscious pseudo-cleverness of those earlier films will feel only slightly less so about this new movie.

However those who loved Hill's previous works will probably eat **Waldo Pepper** up since Hill et al have provided their familiar recipe of nostalgia, jokey action and dialogue, and the lyrical twist of characters having to forsake their supposedly idyllic life styles under the pressure of encroaching modernity (which is of course the whole point to nostalgia anyway). Redford plays a crack flier who got to World War I too late to fight and is trying to compensate for the fact by making it big in the Midwest barnstorming circuit of the late twenties. Unfortunately, his efforts are constantly in the shadow of Kessler (Bo Brundin), a former German ace who is king of the daredevils, and when Waldo and a friend try an unprecedented stunt, the resulting accident gets him grounded by newly created federal regulations.

Robert Redford -- Cute?

Like Joshua Logan's Mister Roberts, Waldo is always being left behind by history, but when he moves to Hollywood and becomes a stunt pilot he finally gets his chance for glory. A film is being made of one of Kessler's famous battles, and he is chosen to recreate the dogfight with Kessler himself -- a combat in which both men eventually forget the cameras and take to serious combat as a gesture of mutual respect and abandonment of the increasingly restricted life on the ground.

The story has possibilities, and to give the filmmakers their due, they haven't shortchanged on production. The aerial sequences have been shot without resort to back projection -- a modern rarity -- and must have been quite complicated to film. There's some good roller coaster photography, and the details of the period seem reasonably authentic (Hill is himself a vintage airplane buff). But if I seem somewhat cynical otherwise about the result, it's because **Waldo Pepper** so transparently homes in on the gravy train of the nostalgia grind. Miss Edith Head's costumes put the women in flapper outfits and the men in quaint baggy pants, and Henry Mancini's music -- echoes that by now have been beaten into our heads by every muzak machine in the country. And consider the other major no-talents involved.

Susan Sarandon -- Sexy?

Margot Kidder -- Skimp?

Consider William Goldman. Goldman is really such a terrible writer that it's hard to see how he has gotten as far as he has: he has the knack for writing lines that sound as though they could have been said by no human being anywhere, at any time. **Waldo Pepper** isn't quite so egregiously awful as some of Goldman's previous work -- Katherine Ross's big I Won't See You Die number from **Butch Cassidy** for example -- but it still has lines that can make you want to squirm in your seat. When Waldo argues with a competing barnstormer in front of a couple of dozen farmers, his antagonist urges with intended wit, "Keep smiling. We don't want to disconcert the masses." A girl (Susan Sarandon) is killed while trying out a wing-walking stunt and one of the fliers remarks, "I knew she wasn't worth top billing." Waldo is grounded and Goldman cranks up for the Big Scene with a line probably lifted from some Indian chief in a B-western: "Are you going to license the clouds and the rain?"

Robert Redford gives Goldman's lines all that they deserve. Whether he is pathetically miscast, as in **Jerimiah Johnson**, or simply incapable, as in **The Great Gatsby**, Redford seems unable (or unwilling?) to project strong emotion and for the most part just stands around looking cooly suggestive or alternately grinning amiably as in this movie. The only Redford film I have seen where he did anything like acting was **The Way We Were**, and there deep feelings were merely implied rather than expressed (indeed, the part reflected the almost palpable embarrassment and shying away from emotion that is his chief characteristic). Suffice it to say that in **Waldo Pepper** Redford provides less character than usual, and ironically when he comes into comparison with Brundin he's not far off the apple-cheeked vacuousness of that movie profile who's supposed to play Kessler in the film-within-a-film. Brundin's Kessler is really far more interesting and one can't help wishing

(Continued on page 7)

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(Continued from page 6)

the movie had been made about him.

Completing this triumvirate of incompetence is director Hill, king of the lame and occasionally phony effect. Such scenes as the big finale from **The Sting** and the pretended rape in **Butch Cassidy** show Hill's willingness to use any kind of contrived trick to get a rise out of the audience, and typically the big pay-off in **Waldo Pepper** promises more than it delivers. Waldo and Kessler try to clip each other's wing struts and landing gear but the flight doesn't come to much and finally just tapers off into a lot of picture pretty cloud stuff.

The Great Waldo Pepper is a reasonably entertaining movie on a certain level and perhaps it's a mistake to take its faults too seriously, but Hill's films have an alarming tendency to be overrated by some critics because he puts enough thematic pill inside all that sugar coating to suggest a serious purpose. Listening to some stalwart of the intelligentsia tell how the Western, which was once designed for 12-year-old audiences, had been transformed by **Butch Cassidy** into a deeply symbolic medium, one is provoked to thoughts about 12-year-old intellectuals (who could see anything profound in that creaky device of the mystic pursuers?) In **Waldo Pepper**, Hill tries to enlarge his subject to a myth of heroism and daring, and some writers, such as Richard Schikel in **Time**, have swallowed this bit of bunkum whole by proclaiming it an important film.

It's not an important film or even a very good one, but it's easy to see why Hill's movies are so popular. Perhaps the closest analogue to the style of these films is the category of popular music known as "bubble gum." When little Donny Osmond sang of his passionate love feelings (before his voice changed) the effect was strangely de-sexed and thus almost poignant -- the way John Dunne's statue lovers desired each other but were unable to do anything about it. The effect was above all **cute**, and cute is the word I find inevitable when dealing with **Waldo Pepper**. The movie emphasizes Susan Sarandon, who isn't particularly sexy, and skimps on Margot Kidder who is. Most of all there is Robert Redford -- probably the most doll-like, well-scrubbed image of movie masculinity ever discovered.

Like **Butch Cassidy** and **The Sting**, **Waldo Pepper** suggests an air of wordly sophistication, but is really just an adolescent, antiseptic idea of what's witty, what's heroic, and what's profound. This isn't quite the Disney brand of wholesomeness, but we're all booked for passage on the Good Ship Lollipop just the same and given this movie's pretensions it's doubly offensive. It's reality cleaned up for kids -- strictly bubble gum.

Venson Steadman

More Musketeers

The Four Musketeers
at the Richland Mall I

As the title suggests, **The Four Musketeers** is a little bit different than **The Three Musketeers.** Not only is there one more musketeer, but the first film's eternal spring-time has slipped away to bitter winter, and, indeed, this production's entire emphasis in view of its predecessor's has radically shifted.

And, so, Milady Du Winter, humanized by Faye Dunaway's subtle performing, becomes a major source of motivation instead of a minor player as before. In **The Three Musketeers,** Milady succeeded in proving the Queen's adultery with the Duke of Buckingham, but D'Artagnan's triumph, and that desire, burning so fervently within her, is the only excuse director Richard Lester needs to send his characters and audience romping through the second half of Alexandre Dumas' massive adventure novel.

This change of season greatly influences scenartist George MacDonald Fraser's conception and Lester's presentation of the action. Lester's bleak winter unleashes the

Michael York as D'Artagnan

blackness of man's heart: Milady plots death, soldiers massacre each other in the name of religion, and D'Artagnan fights his old nemesis (Christopher Lee) on ice instead of in mud.

Lester's visuals move in a straight line from a triggering event (the abduction of Constance) to a satisfying culminating action (the commissioning of D'Artagnan) with all kinds of grandiose side-trips in between. Each event in the film miraculously proceeds from what came just before. The illusion of horizontal action which Lester maintains overcomes the actual vertical movement of the film through the projector, resulting in a balletic grace and rhythmic simplicity which comically animate the film's characters as they go through their paces.

The acting throughout is excellent. Dunaway triumphs nicely as the villainous Milady, successfully balancing the heinousness of her actions against her ephemeral beauty. As D'Artagnan, Michael York is here more capable of carrying the action than he was in the earlier film. Charlton Heston earns forgiveness for **Earthquake** (if not **Airport '75**) for his masterfully controlled performance as Cardinal Richelieu. Not only does he parody his earlier performances as famous religious leaders, but he also builds a stunning portrait of a cold, calculating monolith. Christopher Lee, Raquel Welch, Oliver Reed, Richard Chamberlain, and Frank Finley contribute their special skills to round out the most important of the sharply drawn characters.

Instead of merely plodding along, completing a contractual agreement, **The Four Musketeers** deserves respect for just being itself. The characters are the same as those that appeared in **The Three Musketeers**, and the plot (Musketeers vs. Cardinal) is virtually the same as before, but this second film is something quite different than what you may have anticipated. **The Four Musketeers** is, to be sure, a welcome continuation of **The Three Musketeers,** but also a surprising departure from it, and therein lies its special joys.

Michael Smith

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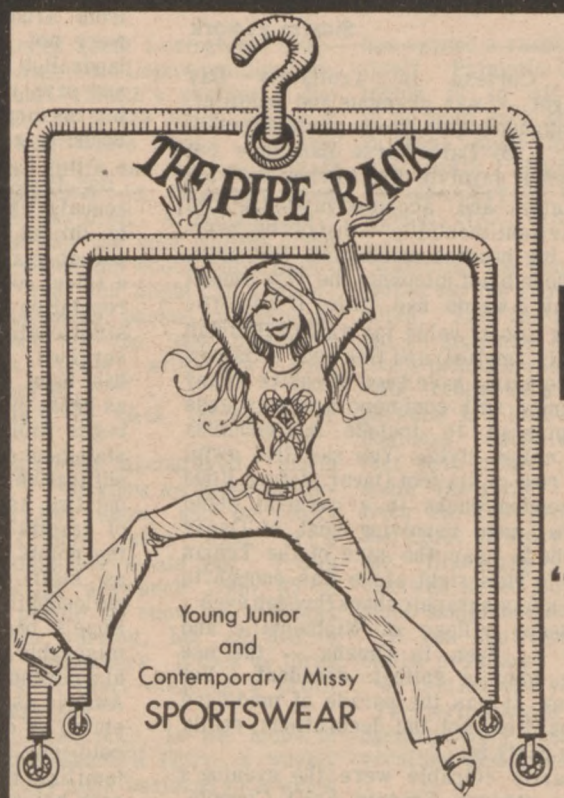

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Were the Oscars ever so garish?

Students of social-anthropology have noted that social rituals in their terminal stages often show discoloring spots of self-justification. Today, to take an extreme example, there exists across our land moribund sects of Protestantism which regularly produce whole sermons solely on the need for sermons. Now, in the wake of the annual Hollywood Rite of Spring, we worry for its health, recalling disturbing spots on both the 46th and 47th Annual Academy Awards celebrations -- signs which could spell doom to at least a segment of America's cult of personality.

Last year's spot came in the form of a speech by the great gangling John Huston, excellent actor, once superlative filmmaker. Huston lectured America at length on the hypocrisy of its perfunctory morning-after put-down of the Academy Awards. He rambled extravagently and was not completely coherent. But luckily for the sorry grace of his untimely sermon, Huston possessed enough improvisational skill to make his point with an unintended, but oddly ingratiating impersonation of a drunken Lee Marvin. He was flagrantly charming, the best of a dirty old man.

Not so benign was this year's brown spot, also a reprimand, delivered up by no less than Frank Sinatra who played no one else but his own belligerent self, and was perfectly annoying. "Contrary to the opinion of Dustin Hoffman," said the Godfather of Show Business, "this evening is not obscene." But you knew it was and so did I. In fact, we thought: were ever the Oscars quite so gross and garish?

*****

Admit it, though, John Huston had a point: every year we middle-brows love to hate the Academy Awards. They're the annual climax of our perennial love-hate relationahip with popular culture -- and quite naturally so, since the movies are the foundation of contemporary popular art. Admit it: every year we stand in the wings of our respective living rooms and pray for this or that sentimental favorite, all the while pretending to loathe the fact that our fellow Americans (but not **we**) are drooling on one of the more gawdy trinkets in the National Archives of Pseudo-Events. Indeed, the Oscars often manage to combine the worst -- or the best, according to your point of view -- of the Pasadena Rose Parade, the Miss America Pagent, and Guy Lombardo on New Year's Eve.

This year was no different (admit it): we found ourselves in the same ridiculous bind, loathing much, liking very little, but watching it all with an eagle eye un the grand finale, then afterwards feeling a little sick and disgusted with outselves. Like the whorehouse, we had to try it one more time, and left with few fond memories -- two to be exact. Ingrid Bergman's acceptance speech for Best Supporting Actress -- in which she simply and sincerely praised the work of fellow nominee Valentina Cortese in Truffaut's **Day For Night** -- was gracious and beautiful, the spontaneous gesture of a perfect gentlewoman. (2) Dark horse candidate but sentimental favorite Art Carney won for Best Actor and accepted his prize with laudable sentimentality -- that old big heart of the big-hearted comedian! But aside from those brief moments the 47th Annual Academy Awards had little, if any, redeeming social value (as Dustin Hoffman rightfully implied) and this year's Oscars would certainly have been offensive to any community with contemporary standards so utopian as to include that nebulous virtue called style. You saw that awful set: a row of six foot Oscar statues lined like wooden ducks in a carnival stand and that huge revolving bust of Oscar somewhere near the size of the Trojan Horse. This sight alone was enough to send a seismographic shock through even the sleepy village of Nielsenville and justify -- even in Omaha -- the use of the commie epithet: **decadent.** Yet we knew it was the parade of mediocre personalities, not the decorations, really did the party in.

Sinatra at work

Primarily culpable were the evening's emcees (though Francis Ford Coppola, multiple winner with **Godfather II**, fully greedy in demeanor, contributed one whale of a fat sweaty hand.) Besides Sinatra, there was John Wayne, Sammy Davis, Jr., Shirley MacLaine and Bob Hope. And Bob Hope. Let's pick first on the Great White (beady-eyed) Hope. If you love Bob Hope and think he did great things for all our boys in Nam; if you admire the Duke and don't happen to think that Sammy Davis Jr. is the phoniest verbal spastic to hit the screen since the Phantom of the San Clemente Opera, then maybe you'd better avoid the ensuing thoughts on Big Bob and skip on down to where, in the interests of more than political equanimity, we take 40 whacks at the unctuous presence of Shirley MacLaine.

Bob Hope, as in innumerable past years, was the evening's first Master of Ceremonies. Since Bob's act tends to run thin after 30 seconds it was indeed unfortunate that he had already been on the tube for an hour and a half before the Oscars, "hosting" what it would be much to flattering to call a warm-up show. **The Gillette Cavalcade of Champions** was a lockerroom Oscar show for sports figures in which most of the athletes appeared, eyes riveted to the teleprompter, as eminently embarrassing stiffs. As did Bob Hope himself. As usual. You would have thought the producers would have been kind enough to place Hope further back on the Academy Awards program in order to give us a brief respite -- between the locker room and the ballroom -- from his presence. As it was scheduled, however, Hope's presence at these back-to-back disasters was as ubiquitous as that of the Man from Allstate, though we well knew we were **not** in good hands. Wherever he lands Bob Hope collects large premiums and pays miniscule benefits. We watched his opening monologue. We followed the bouncing medicine ball.

Bob Hope, say it again and again, is to comedy what Charlton Heston is (or was) to drama: a rather dry, uninteresting pseudo-classic figure, an institution first, a talent fourth or fifth. Hope's overrated reputation as an entertainer has been institutionalized by his conservative civil services, just as adequate actor Heston has been canonized in the popular mind as **great** by virtue of his roles in DeMille's bogus Biblical epics. It's a gross understatement (repeated here for the aesthetic edification of the Silent Majority), to point out that as a comic Hope has no sphere of insight on which to variously locate the points to jokes generously described as staff memorandums shaped by the philosophic dictates of **Reader's Digest.** Hope's bag of one-liners are always a miserable job of social acupuncture and his perennial appearance on the Academy Awards assures that the evening bears the stamp of one hell of a nice (but strangely cold) guy and a hollow man -- as old and familiar to Middle America as the five sexy holes in the side of your dusty Buick.

It would be silly and unkind to come down so hard on Shirley MacLaine. Posessed of a conscience so mercurial it fairly shimmers -- especially in the limelight -- Shirley is only one perhaps misguided ball of feeling while Hope, of course, is an almost invulnerable U.S. institution. It's been more touching than galling in recent weeks to watch Shirley on talk shows trying to announce her candidacy for comeback performer, while promoting her book, and making Deeply Felt Statements about her trip to mainland China with a bunch of other American ladies (a trip which **The New Yorker** described as a pillow party). Shirley is in desperate need of a certain indefinable something to outline and contain a potentially attractive frothy-liquid flamboyance. Maybe just plain brains, we thought, as she **glided** onto the set as an attempted re-run of **Sweet Charity,** obviously determined to be Mistress of much, much more than the ceremonies at hand -- after China, the world?

*****

There was another "political speech" this year at the Oscars. It went by so fast and was read so demurely by such a polite young man that we almost missed it. Peter Davis, who won the Best Documentary Oscar for **Hearts and Minds,** an anti-war film about Vietnam, read a short telegram, ostensibly from an official of North Vietnam, congratulating America for its (by-default) help in the on-going liberation of South Vietnam. It was salt rubbed cruelly but quickly and casually into the wounds of the hawks.

We can be sure that The Great White Hope turned green in the wings. Later, we learned, it was he who composed the denouncement, in the name of the Academy, of the "political demonstration" -- and gave it to Sinatra to read near the end of the show. Presumably, a lot went on back stage in the way of partisan bickering, but on television the "demonstration" and its "denouncement" seemed no more than two tics on the giant revolving bust of Oscar. Political speeches at the Academy Awards aren't political, they're medical -- meager antidotes for that dangerous euphoria produced by nearly three hours of a contained, collective egotism hyperventilating. Those of us in the philosophic tutorage of that late great master of political happenings, Abbie Hoffman, had only one last desperate hope: that in that sorry bust of Oscar (somewhere near the size of the Trojan Horse!) crouched some scurrilous army of counterculture Huns ready to spring to the floor at the given signal and piss a 21-gun eulogy for the late Lenny Bruce. It would have been awful. It would have been wonderful. It would have, well, seriously **vandalized** the ceremony.

*****

Of course it didn't happen. We watched the giant bust of Oscar, and I, for one, hallucinated. Out of the big Oscar popped ten little Indians, not from the real world, or even from Brando's para-political enterprise, but from that drastically fractured nursery rhyme (One little, two little, three little Indians!). Doing the can-can. Costumes by Raoul Peni DuBois.

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John Denver
In Concert (April 9, 1975)
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-- Mother Nature's son
All day long I'm singing songs for everyone
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see her waters rise
Listen to the pretty sound of music as she flies"
Lennon and McCartney

As we all know, it's not nice to fool Mother Nature. Once deceived the great lady will replace serenity with severity; transform the most peaceful of climates into violent and tempestuous environments endangering the existence of any species caught by her fury.

The ole lady has nothing to fear from John Denver, however; her little boy is roaming the nation relating her many virtues and extolling her every claim. Thirteen thousand persons jammed into Carolina Coliseum April 9 to witness Denver's testimonial to the out-of-doors and his musical statement in support of the simple, uncomplicated life.

From the opening lines of "Sunshine on My Shoulders" it was evident that Denver genuinely possesses a sincerity and conviction of belief in the subject matter of his songs: this personal commitment was much more effectively communicated in concert setting than through the recording medium and despite his reference to performing in a "small aircraft depository" his message was well-received in the $5 seats near the rafters as well as the more expensive locales up-front. Furthermore, Denver developed an immediate amicable relationship with the audience based on his friendly, out-going stage personality and the suspected corny, sugar-coated exterior never really materialized.

"Relax, ease back, and go where the music takes you."

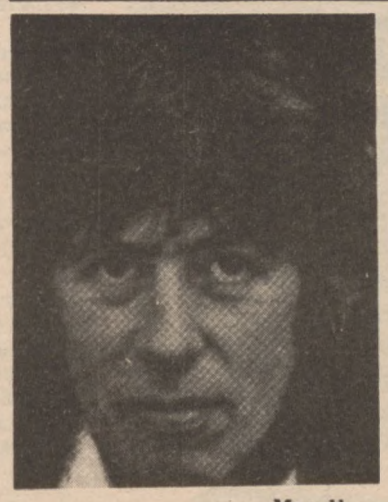
Following the mood setting opener, Denver told the crowd to "relax, ease back, and go where the music takes you" -- which happened to be to Colorado and "Rocky Mountain High." As he sang, there was projected onto viewing screens synchronized scenes of the region and the beauty about which Denver was singing was apparent to all in the Coliseum. These first two songs set the musical atmosphere for the remainder of the evening as they conveyed a peaceful, at ease feeling. Denver then took some jibes at the City of Columbia ("Gateway to Saluda") and reeled off some of the local landmarks he was acquainted with. This was somewhat refreshing in that I always have the feeling that most performers have no idea of what city they are playing in. "Saturday Night in Toledo, Ohio" was dedicated to the towns on the tour which roll-up the sidewalks after 6 p.m. and this proved to be an amusing number. "Good to Be Back Home" featured some good pedal steel guitar work, "Matthew" was aided by the on-screen projections, and "Rocky Mountain Suite" from the television special "Big Horn" was highlighted by the lush backing provided by the 25-piece orchestra which accompanied Denver. James Taylor's "Carolina In My Mind" was particularly well sung and was obviously a crowd favorite as was the funny Tom Paxton satire on the mortuary business, "Forest Lawn." As Denver tells it, Forest Lawn is the only cemetery in the United States where "fireworks spell out Rest In Peace."

Michael Murphy's "Boy From the Country" suffered from some weird lyrics ("Because he calls the forest brother, calls the earth his mother, they drove him out to the rain, some people even said the boy from the country was insane"), but was a convenient vehicle for Denver's natural theme. An animated cartoon with a "Big Yellow Taxi" message was then shown and I had the feeling that sooner or later Marlin Perkins would appear and wrestle a rocky mountain goat to the death.

Marlin didn't show, but Jacques Cousteau did, in the form of his boat "Calypso" on which Denver recently sailed, and the song recalling that journey held promise as a new Denver release. "Grandma's Featherbed" provided an up-tempo break, before "Annie's Song," and "The Eagle and the Hawk." The latter was perhaps the high point of the evening. Denver concluded with "Take Me Home Country Road" and "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" from his "An Evening With John Denver" album which so conveniently coincides with the current spring tour.

He returned to the stage to finish with "This Ole Guitar", a reflective number in line with the majority of the evening's songs. "I love to sing my songs to you," Denver sang. I think he does.

Tim Driggers



Mayall

Mayall not up to par

New Year, New Band, New Company
John Mayall
Blue Thumb Records

John Mayall is one of the most fascinating puzzles of the musical world. The "ever-changing" Loving Spoonful -- as that band used to be labeled -- has never changed as frequently and quixotically as has Mayall and his band. From hard-driving, visceral blues, to light acoustic rock, to horn-heavy jazz, Mayall has kept changing, making himself the source of much speculation as to what he'll be into next. He probably wouldn't have it any other way.

Yet this latest release from the fortyish British-born Mayall confirms my impression that he needs to direct his metamorphosis a lot more carefully. "New Year, New Band, New Company" contains some promising new aspects but Mayall can't seem to put all the necessary ingredients together in one album. Appropriately, the last album in which he did get it all together was "Back to the Roots," a masterful double album recorded in 1970 in which Mayall assembled the best of his former colleagues in a showcase of talents -- theirs and his. With a lineup of musicians like Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor, Sugarcane Harris, Harvey Mandel and Keef Hartley playing together, what could go wrong?

Much of Mayall's appeal through the years has stemmed from the excellent musicians he's had playing with him, perhaps as much as from his own talents. Surrounded by greatness, Mayall rises to the occasion; conversely, surrounded by bland mediocrity, he unfortunately tends to sink to lesser levels of musicianship. Mayall seems to have lost -- temporarily, we hope -- his magical touch for bringing up-and-coming young musicians to the forefront, the Claptons, Taylors, Peter Greens, Jack Bruces and the like.

One new talent he seems to have discovered on this album is Dee McKinnie, who shares the vocals with Mayall. What a freakout, Mayall sharing the spotlight with another vocalist! Why, the last time he let anyone sing on one of his albums was Peter Green, and that was only for a couple of songs seven or eight years ago. McKinnie also shares the distinction of being the first woman to join Mayall's ever-changing musical cast. She's damn good, too, on what few selections she is featured.

McKinnie adds a gospelish, Bonnie Bramlett sound to the album, especially on "Step in the Sun." She's got a rough, sassy voice,

(Continued on page 11)

Good bluegrass, but no one there

Palmetto Opry #1
in Lexington
April 12, 1975

By 11 p.m. things onstage were warming up. The Sugarloaf Ramblers, a smooth, tight young bluegrass band from North Carolina, sailed through "Rocky Top" and "Rawhide," the mandolin and banjo breaks sizzling and lightning fast. The dobro player did some buckdancing during "Train 45." Then the Ramblers shared the stage with the Jones Brothers & Log Cabin Boys, the other half of the show's one-two bluegrass punch, and the twin-instrument combinations produced some of the most pleasing hill sounds you'll hear. The audience, all 30 of them, just had to smile.

Chalk up the debut show at the Palmetto Opry #1 Saturday night, April 12, as an embarrassing flop from the financial standpoint. "It looks like Uncle Sam's gonna lose some money on this one," mused a semi-smiling J.C. Smith, the Opry's co-operator, as he scanned the sparse corps of customers scattered about Lexington's spacious American Legion building auditorium. Smith's partner in the venture is Bruce Jones, leader of the Log Cabin Boys. The two bands, Smith and his family-staff all traveled to Lexington from North Carolina. At midnight Saturday they ate cold hotdogs from the concession booth which hadn't done what you might call a booming business, packed up and headed out for the long, late-night drive home with few good memories.

They'll be back, believe it or not.

"We're not discouraged," Smith said. "We know we under-advertised this show, and we really didn't know what kind of a response we would get. I was expecting anywhere from 25 to 200 people to show up. It was a poor turnout, but we had to start somewhere. It took us three years to start clearing a profit at Pageland."

Pageland, S.C., is the home of Smith's Sandhill Opry, a weekly Saturday night business show which has earned a respectable name for itself. Palmetto Opry #1 in Lexington is an off-spring project to be held each second and fourth Saturday night for awhile on a trial basis. Another off-spring, Tarheel Opry #1 in East Rockingham, N.C., will crank up June 7.

Watching the two bands jam together for the show's finale, Smith noted, "They can't play good without an audience. This is sort of like a practice session."

But rehearsal's over, and apparently it's now down to serious business. Smith seems confident that with proper advertising and some favorable word-of-mouth from the few people who came, the April 26 Opry, which features the Bluegrass Kats and the Catawba River Boys, will achieve some semblance of success.

"If you show enough interest," Smith promised the audience, "we'll stick with you."

This writer hopes so, because the opening Opry was, incidentally, excellent bluegrass entertainment.

Dan Harmon

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EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Edited by Venson Steadman
April 19-25

cinema

ATLANTIC I THEATRE, 3220 Two Notch Road, 786-0790
"Black Lolita" stars Yolanda Love and is rated R. Times are 3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30.

ATLANTIC II THEATRE, 3220 Two Notch Road, 786-0790
"China Girl" and "Dark Dreams." Both rated X. First complete show at 3:30, last at 8:30.

CAROLINA THEATRE, 1223 Main Street, 252-8011.
"Cato and the Green Hornet" provides comeuppance for the famous crime fighter's sidekick. Bruce Lee stars. PG. 1, 2:40, 4:20, 6 and 7:40.

CINE-ART THEATRE, 1017 Washington Street, 779-3039
"Teenage Sex Kittens" and "Coming of Age." Both X with continuous shows at 1 p.m.

DUTCH SQUARE NORTH THEATRE, Dutch Square Mall, 789-1110
"The Great Waldo Pepper." No light at the end of the tunnel on this one. Actually, the action sequences in this film about barnstormers are unusually good, but who can take two hours of George Roy Hill's sugary direction, William Goldman's execrable dialogue, and Robert Redford flexing his dimples? G. 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9.

DUTCH SQUARE SOUTH THEATRE, Dutch Square Mall, 789-1110
"Call of the Wild." A new version of the Jack London story with Charlton Heston at 2, 4, 6 and 8.

FOX THEATRE, 1607 Main Street, 254-5212
"Chinatown." Director Roman Polanski and writer Robert Towne revisit the world of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, but this is no mere nostalgia binge. Based on an actual incident in L.A. during the thirties, "Chinatown" is tightly knit detective story that has some serious things to say about corruption. Jack Nicholson is not so much the Bogart of the seventies as what Bogart would be if he were still working. Show times are 2, 4, 6:15 and 8:30.

GAMECOCK I THEATRE, Parkland Plaza Shopping Center, 796-0022
"Lenny" doesn't hype up its subject the way old Hollywood bios would (or such new Hollywood bios as "Lady Sings the Blues"), but the producers and director Bob Fosse have subtly sentimentalized the life of counter-culture hero Lenny Bruce. All the same, there are some witty stylistic tricks, a first rate job by Valerie Perrine, and a brilliant performance (as opposed to acting) by Dustin Hoffman. Rated R, the times are 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9. The children's matinee this weekend is "A Boy Named Charley Brown" with shows at 11 and 1 on the 19th and 1 on the 20th.

GAMECOCK II THEATRE, Parkland Plaza Shopping Center, 796-0022
"Escape to Witch Mountain" changes locations with features at 1:45, 4, 6:15, and 8:30. It's Disney.

JEFFERSON SQUARE THEATRE, Jefferson Square, Downtown, 254-6731
"The Reincarnation of Peter Proud" stars Jennifer O'Neill with Michael Sarrazin as the reincarnee. Shows at 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9.

MIRACLE THEATRE, 1228 Main Street, 256-1950
"Young Frankenstein" continues. Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, Marty Feldman, Terri Garr, Cloris Leachman, Madeline Kahn, and Kenneth Mars. They're all superb in Mel Brooks' most nearly perfect comedy. PG. Ends soon, so see it if you haven't at 1, 3:05, 5:10, 7:15 and 9:25.

PALMETTO THEATRE, 1417 Main Street, 254-5800
"Shampoo" is a superb new comedy that is going into its 4th week and hopefully will be around for many more. Warren Beatty plays a Don Juan hairdresser who gives his customers more than just coiffing in a bedroom farce that is both funny and thoughtfully restrained. Good acting by Goldie Hawn, Lee Grant, and Julie Christie, solid direction by Hal Ashby, and a wise script by producer Beatty and Robert Towne ("Chinatown"). R. 3, 5, 7 and 9.

PLAZA III THEATRE, 1323 Main Street, 254-7960
"Gone With the West" stars James Caan and Sammy Davis Jr. in a "Blazing Saddles" style spoof. R. 1, 2:40, 4:20, 6 and 7:40.

RICHLAND MALL I THEATRE, Richland Mall, 782-2228
"The Four Musketeers" is a continuation of last year's "The Three Musketeers" which judging from its predecessor should be a funny if thoroughly lightweight entertainment. This one reportedly has a lot more blood. Times are 3, 5, 7 and 9.

RICHLAND MALL II THEATRE, Richland Mall, 782-2228
"Dirty Harry" and "Magnum Force" in a back-to-back reissue. Four hours of Clint Eastwood is a mind-boggling proposition. Both are R. Individual features at 3:20, 5:20, 7:20 and 9:20.

Roman Polanski

clubs

THE SECOND LEVEL, 2011 Devine Street, 771-4794
"Foothills Orchestra" on the 18th and 19th; "Hal and Leon" next Monday (April 21); "Rusty Davis" on Wednesday; "Sour Mash" will sing next weekend (April 25th and 26th). Cover charge is $1 per head -- no membership required.

THE CHOPPING BLOCK, 1021 Briargate Circle, 772-2011
"Mary Hill" continues for the 18th and 19th. No cover.

JADE EAST, Carolina Inn, 937 Assembly Street, 799-8200
"The Platters" on April 18 and 19. "Gary and the U.S. Bonds tentatively scheduled for the 25th and 26th. Call for information on cover charges.

THE NEW SOUTH MUSIC HALL AND WHISKEY PARLOR, 4614 Devine Street, 787-6505
"The Masons" through the 19th. Call for charges.

THE POINT AFTER, 304 Greystone Blvd., 254-8101
"The Beginnings" continue on April 18 and 19. $1 for men and women get in free Monday through Thursday. $2.50 for singles and $5 for couples on the weekend.

THE COPPER DOOR, 2703 Rosewood Dr., 771-9387
"Freedom" on April 18 and 19. "Sugar Loaf" Sunday. Call about cover charges.

THE LEFT GUARD, 2728 Rosewood Dr., 799-2575
"Road Apple" through the 19th. "Single Tree" next week (April 21 through 26). Admission is $2 for members on Friday and Saturday; a membership card, costing $5 per year and $1 per month, is required.

theatre

Love's Labor's Lost, Shakespeare's delightful satire of sexual mores, will be presented at Drayton Hall on the USC campus Tuesday, April 22 through Friday, April 26. Curtain time is 8:15 p.m. and tickets are $3 for adults, $1 for students.

art

Sculpture by Jane Armstrong is the featured exhibit at the Columbia Museum of Art through May 7. Armstrong, who lives and works in Vermont, specializes in free-form sculpture that she invites the spectator to touch and well as see.

Exhibits in the Museum's Silver Anniversary celebration will be continuting through April 20, including an "American Landscape Painter Survey" that is presented in arrangement with New York's Coe Kerr gallery and a look at the work of "South Carolina Silversmiths" dating back as far as 1800.

music

John C. Bircher, Jr. will present a faculty percussion recital on the USC campus Wednesday, April 23 at 8 p.m. Mr. Bircher will play marimba, timpani, and vibes with selections from both a classical and jazz repertory. The recital is in Fraser Hall and is open to the public free of charge.

The Carpenters are singing at Carolina Coliseum on Sunday, April 20 and tickets

(Continued on page 11)

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Sun Dinner 5:30-8:30

Events

(Continued from page 10)

are still available in the $6.50 and $5.50 sections. Contact the Coliseum box office or ticket outlets.

The Columbia Chapter of the Society For the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America will present its 12th annual parade of Quartets on Friday, April 25, 1975, at 8 p.m. in the Dreher High School auditorium. Tickets are $3.50 each and will be on sale at the box office the night of the show.

specials

A Nineteenth Century Living History Exposition will be held at the Robert Mills House, 1616 Blanding Street, on April 26 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visitors will be able to both witness and participate in such skills from the 1800's as churning butter, taffy pulling, a quilting bee, and many games of the period. One of the highlights of the Exposition will be the first public appearance of the 2nd Regiment, South Carolina line, a group of men and women from across the state who will set up a Revolutionary War camp and stage authentic drills complete with drums, fifes, and bagpipes. The Exposition is free, and picknickers are invited or visitors can buy box lunches and drinks on the grounds.

A free Pap Smear Clinic is scheduled on Tuesday, April 22 from 4 to 10 p.m. and on Wednesday, April 23 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Women of all ages are invited to take this important cancer test. The clinic will be located in the Ambulatory Care Center of the old Columbia Hospital on Harden Street.

Local Government and the Arts will be the subject of a conference to be held all day April 29 at the South Carolina Arts Commission headquarters in Columbia. Honorary chairman for the conference will be Mrs. James Edwards and a wide range of subjects will be discussed including the nature of the arts council movement and the potential services from such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts. Interested citizens may register for a $7.50 fee; deadline for registration is April 25.

The scheduled evenings of South Carolina filmmaking continue Saturday, April 26 with "Appalshop" by Scott Faulkner and Gene Dubey. The showing will be at 8 p.m. in the Columbia Museum of Art's Trustees Gallery and is open free to the public.

Kneading bread will be one of the exhibits at the 19th Century Living History exposition.

lectures

Peter Betocci will speak at the Edens Library of Columbia College Tuesday, April 22, on the subject: "On Living in 'The age of the Person.'" The lecture is in room 119 and open to the public.

television

Saturday, April 21

1 p.m. - Basketball. NBA Play-off. Boston vs. Houston. Golden State plays Seattle at 3:30. (Channel 19)

2 p.m. - Tennis. Opening round of the L'eggs World Series of Women's Tennis from Austin, Texas. (Channel 25)

2:15 p.m. - Baseball. San Diego Padres versus the Braves from Atlanta. (Channel 10)

8 p.m. - ABC News Closeup. "Lawyers: Guilty As Charged?" looks at such abuses of law practice as excessive fees, poor service for clients, and the inadequate enforcement of bar regulations against corrupt or unethical practices by its members. (Channel 25)

8 p.m. - Movie. "Delancey Street" is a new TV dramatization of the San Francisco halfway house and its operator that were spotlighted on 60 Minutes recently. (Channel 10)

9:30 p.m. - Hollywood Television Theatre. Cloris Leachman stars in "Ladies of the Corridor," Dorothy Parker's 1953 play about a New York residential hotel and the lonely women who inhabit it. Co-authored by Arnaud d'Usseau and the other cast members include Jane Wyatt and Zohra Lampert. (Channel 35)

10 p.m. - Woman of the Year Awards. Ladies' Home Journal chooses eight leading females from a wide range of career fields. Florence Henderson hosts. (Channel 19)

Sunday, April 20

10:30 a.m. - Marshall Efron's Sunday School. Off-beat comic Efron narrates a comic strip version of the prodigal son story and a puppet adaptation of the story of Joseph. (Channel 19)

1 p.m. - Basketball. NBA Play-off. Buffalo vs. Washington. (Channel 19)

2:45 p.m. - Tennis. L'eggs women's competition concludes. (Channel 25)

3:30 p.m. - Hockey. NHL Stanley Cup Play-off game. (Channel 10)

3:30 p.m. - NBA Play-off. Kansas City against Chicago. (Channel 19)

4:30 p.m. - Golf. Top women players compete for the $200,000 prize money of the Dinah Shore Winners Circle Championship. (Channel 25)

8:30 p.m. - Tony Awards. The best Broadway plays and performances are kudoed in the 29th annual awards. (Channel 25)

Monday, April 21

9 p.m. - Tom T. Hall. The Storyteller. Taped highlights of a nightclub act by the country singer. (Channel 35)

10 p.m. - CBS News reports the public and government views on the question, "The U.S. Commitment to Israel -- How Long? How Strong?" (Channel 19)

Tuesday, April 22

8 p.m. - CBS Reports. "The I.Q. Myth" looks at the accuracy and importance of IQ tests. Also included are comparisons of test results and later success as adults. Dan Rather reports. (Channel 19)

8:30 p.m. - Movie. "QB VII." A long (five hours) and somewhat boring account of an author accused of libel for a book detailing Nazi war crimes. Adapted from the Leon Uris best seller with Ben Gazzara and Anthony Hopkins.

9:30 p.m. - The Forgotten War. A PBS documentary about the Allied attempt to stop the Bolshevik revolution at the end of World War I. Reported by Robert MacNeil with much newsreel footage. (Channel 35)

Wednesday, April 23

9 p.m. - Movie. Part 2 of "QB VII."

9 p.m. - Solar Energy. The future and techniques of solar power are considered. (Channel 35)

10 p.m. - Dan August. First repeat of the series that propelled Burt Reynolds to stardom. (Channel 19)

Thursday, April 24

8 p.m. - Lights! Camera! Monty! A tour of the Universal studio backlot with Steve Lawrence, Michele Lee, and Marty Feldman singing and dancing. The worm in this video apple is host/star Monty "Let's Make A Deal" Hall, who is apparently trying to shuck his image as the king of game show banality. (Channel 25)

9 p.m. - Movie. "QB VII" concludes. (Channel 25)

9 p.m. - Movie. "The Grapes of Wrath." Opinions differ as to the success of John Ford's Steinbeck adaptation, but this 1940 film is unquestionably one of the most important to ever come out of Hollywood. It stars Henry Fonda, John Carradine, and Jane Darwell, who won as Oscar as Ma Joad. Photography by Gregg Toland. (Channel 19)

11:30 p.m. - Wide World Special. David Frost leads a pro and con discussion of abortion with Dr. Kenneth Edelin as one of the guests. (Channel 25)

Friday, April 25

9 p.m. - Movie. "Planet of the Apes." The original with Charlton Heston, Kim Hunter, and Roddy McDowall. (Channel 19)

10:30 p.m. - The Romantic Rebellion. Lord Clark examines the work of August Rodin, whom he considers the last of the great 19th Century Romantics. (Channel 35)

11:30 p.m. - Wide World In Concert. Alice Cooper undergoes a musical nightmare led by guest Vincent Price. The concert is an adaptation of his recent road show. (Channel 25)

1 a.m. - Midnight Special. Rod Stewart and Faces, and guitarist Keith Richard in a concert from London's Kilburn State Theatre. (Channel 10)

Mayall

(Continued from page 9)

which is great for type of music Mayall is drifting into -- lighthearted, entertaining trifles, an amalgam of J.J. Cale Okie shitkicker type tunes and archetypal Mayall mundaneness. Mayall's never been much at poetic lyrics. Whenever he has tried to get a moral across or some such rot, it's been a futile effort in pedantry. So Mayall has been best when he has used his lyrics, as Pink Floyd would, to set a backdrop for his instrumentals.

"New Year" is a patently inconsistent album, jumping from extreme to extreme. The high points are high, and the lows, drat them, low. Predictably, the most impressive cut is "My Train Time," which is, for the uninitiated, a conventional Mayall train song, one of which he includes in every album, it seems. Mayall has a fascination for trains -- or more likely for the many ways the Compleat Musician can imitate one. Mayall uses the same techniques in all of his train songs -- harmonica as ersatz train whistle; accelerating drums giving an impression of speed; the typically Mayall "vocal percussion" adding further onomotopoeia. But as usual, it all works, helped in this case no little bit by the flashy fiddle work of Sugarcane Harris.

Providing the instrumental accompaniment for Mayall and McKinnie are Harris and Larry Taylor, who've been with Mayall for half a dozen years (Harris off and on, Taylor steadily). The "new band" consists of Rick Vito on guitar, Soko Richardson on drums, and Jay Spell on electric piano and clavinet. The trio are merely adequate, though Spell does show flashes of funky brilliance on several cuts. Vito's electric guitar lacks the vitality and bite of a Clapton or Green.

Mayall exerts supreme control over all aspects of his albums, writing and producing all songs, handling many of the lead instrumentals (on piano, harmonica, and 12-string and slide guitars), designing his album covers and even taking album photos at times. Such a self-assumed burden wouldn't seem to leave much room for perfectionism, especially for a musician who tours as much as Mayall. I have a feeling Mayall enjoys playing before live audiences more than he does sitting in a recording studio polishing up his latest recording. It shows.

"New Year" is a pleasing album for Mayall fans, but it's not up to the usual standards. There's nothing missing that a little studio work and some top-flight musicians couldn't fix, though. Maybe next time...

Bob Thompson

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